

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1345  
INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
USIA WASHDC  
AMCONSUL IBADAN  
AMCONSUL KADUNA

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TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, NI, US  
SUBJECT: EDITORIAL RESPONSE TO GARBA TV INTERVIEW: LET'S GIVE  
AMERICA A CHANCE

REF: LAGOS 5830 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: U.S. INITIATIVES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA CONTINUE TO WIN APPROVAL OF NIGERIAN MEDIA. FMG MAY HAVE HELPED INITIATIVE PRESENT FLURRY OF PRESS COMMENTARY BY PLACING QUESTION ON ZAIRE MEDIATION FOR EXTAFF COMMISSIONER TO ANSWER IN RECENT TV INTERVIEW. EDITORIALS IN //SKETCH// AND //TRIBUNE// SUPPORT COMMISSIONER GARBA'S STATEMENT ON ZAIRE-ANGOLA, ZIMBABWE AND U.S.-NIGERIAN RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. NIGERIAN DAILIES CONTINUE FAVORABLE EDITORIAL COMMENT ON U.S. SOUTHERN AFRICA POLICY. FMG MAY HAVE HAD HAND IN SETTING

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OFF THIS PRESS CAMPAIGN. IN TV INTERVIEW MAY 18 (REFTEL) NBC TELEVISION CHIEF OF NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS, ALHAJI SAKA FAGBO, (AN FMG EMPLOYEE) ASKED GARBA A QUESTION THAT APPEARED TO BE PLANTED. HE SAID, "ON ANGOLA AND ZAIRE, NIGERIA'S RESPONSE TO AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IS ON A HOPEFUL NOTE. OUR ENEMIES MIGHT SEE THIS AS A TYPE OF LINKAGE. THEY MIGHT USE IT TO DISCREDIT US IN THE EYES OF OUR AFRICAN FRIENDS. YOU KNOW YOURSELF, MR.

COMMISSIONER, THAT OUR ROLE IS BEING INTERPRETED IN MANY WAYS BY VARIOUS NIGERIANS. THEY THINK WE ARE BEING TELEGUIDED.." TO THIS GARBA RESPONDED AS IF HE HAD BEEN LYING IN WAIT, "THANK YOU SAKA, THAT IS A VERY GOOD QUESTION.. I CONDEMN THIS OPINION WHICH IS HELD BY PEOPLE WHO SHOULD KNOW BETTER..."

2. NEWSPAPERS HAVE EAGERLY SNAPPED UP GARBA'S BAIT. //SKETCH// (USUALLY HOSTILE), IN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "LET'S GIVE AMERICA A CHANCE," SAYS GARBA'S CASTIGATION OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE NIGERIA "TELEGUIDED" BY USG IS "QUITE IN ORDER." //SKETCH// BELIEVES GARBA'S ASSESSMENT OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION INITIATIVES IS CORRECT: AFTER FAILURE OF GENEVA IT WAS THE U.S. "THAT TOOK THE NEW ON-GOING INITIATIVE TO GET BLACKS TO TAKE OVER POWER.." ADMINISTRATION'S PROMISE TO REPEAL THE BYRD AMENDMENT HAS BEEN FULFILLED. AMBASSADOR YOUNG IS ON SECOND TOUR OF AFRICA TO ASSURE AFRICAN LEADERS THAT U.S. STANDS FOR MAJORITY RULE IN ZIMBABWE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE "WARNED VORSTER THAT HE SHOULD NOT COUNT ON U.S. SUPPORT IF HE CONTINUED TO BACK REBEL IAN SMITH..AND IF HE DID NOT REVERSE HIS APARTHEID POLICY." WHILE ADMITTING THAT MANY NIGERIANS ARE STILL SKEPTICAL ABOUT GOOD INTENTIONS OF USG, //SKETCH// SAYS "NIGERIANS TOO SHOULD SEE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AS..GENUINELY TRYING TO PRESS A CHANGE OF SOUTH AFIRCA AND CORRECT AMERICA'S PAST NEGLECT OF AFRICA."

3. ON NIGERIAN MEDIATION BETWEEN ZAIRE AND ANGOLA, //SKETCH// SAYS THERE IS NO QUESTION OF U.S. "TELEGUIDING" NIGERIA. FMG "IS MORALLY RIGHT TO TRY TO RESOLVE A DISPUTE BETWEEN TWO AFRICAN COUNTRIES. WE BELIEVE NIGERIA IS NOT TAKING INSTRUCTIONS

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FROM THE U.S. AND IS ONLY PLAYING THE MATURE ROLE EXPECTED OF HER IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS."

4. //TRIBUNE// EDITORIAL ENTITLED "UNREASONABLE MUGABE" BEGINS WITH CRITICISM OF PATRIOTIC FRONT LEADER FOR REJECTING ANGLO-AMERICAN INITIATIVE: "IT IS UNCHARITABLE TO ASSUME THAT MR. MAGABE'S UNREASONABLE STAND IS DUE TO HIS LACK OF POLITICAL SUPPORT AMONG THE ZIMBABWEAN PEOPLE. BUT HIS ABHORRENCE OF ANY PROPOSAL FOR A POLITICAL RATHER THAN A MILITARY SOLUTION LENDS CREDENCE TO THIS INFERENCE." EDITORIAL GOES ON TO ENDORSE FMG SOUTHERN AFRICA POLICY. COMMISSIONER GARBA "IN HIS BRILLANT TELEVISION PRESS CONFERENCE LAST WEDNESDAY, SPOKE SENSE NOT ONLY ON THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INITIATIVE IN ZIMBABWE BUT ALSO IN NIGERIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND THE ZAIREAN-ANGOLAN CRISIS."

5. EDITORIAL CONTINUES "INSTEAD OF RUSHING TO TAKE SIDES IN ZAIRE (AS WE RASHLY DID IN ANGOLA) WE HAVE ADOPTED A RESPECTABLE MEDIATING ROLE; INSTEAD OF DISMISSING THE ANGOLO-AMERICAN

INITIATIVE AS AN IMPERIALIST OR NEO-COLONIALIST PLOT, WE HAVE MAINTAINED A "WAIT-AND-SEE" POSITION. AS FOR AMERICAN NIGERIAN RELATIONS, IT IS REFRESHING TO LEARN FROM BRIGADIER GARBA THAT THE CHANGED AMERICAN ATTITUDE WAS STARTED BY DR. HENRY KISSINGER WHOSE VISIT TO NIGERIA WAS SO FOOLISHLY CANCELLED. THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER SPOKE WITH SUCH CONVICTION THAT ONE CANNOT HELP FEELING THAT HE HAS ONLY JUST SUCCEEDED IN GETTING HIS OWN PERSONNEL IDEAS ACCEPTED BY THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL. IT IS ALL TO THE GOOD."

6. //OBSERVER// MAY 24 COMMENTS APPROVINGLY ON U.S. WARNINGS TO SOUTH AFRICA. THOUGH SKEPTICAL OF WESTERN DETERMINATION TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON CURRENT INITIATIVES, //OBSERVER// JUDGES THAT IF WEST CARRIES OUT ITS THREAT "SOUTH AFRICA WILL BE BROUGHT TO HER KNEE'S IN A SHORTER TIME THAN WE HAVE HAD ANY CAUSE TO HOPE FOR..... IF THE BLACKS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA CAN WIN THEIR FREEDOM WITHOUT SACRIFICING THE LIVES OF THEIR YOUNG

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MEN AND WOMEN, THIS CAN ONLY BE WELCOME NOT ONLY TO THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS BUT ALSO TO THEIR WELL-WISHERS."

7. COMMENT: EMBASSY SUSPECTS THAT AFTER WEEKS OF PATIENT MEDIATION BETWEEN ZAIRE AND ANGOLA, FMG BECAME ANNOYED AT PRESS WHICH WAS CONTINUING PRO-MPLA, ANTI-MOBUTU, "ANTI-IMPERIALIST" LITANY OF 1976-76 ANGOLA CRISIS. GARBA INTERVIEW WAS CHANCE TO EXPOUND NEW, "MATURE" FMG THINKING AND EMPHASIZE NIGERIA'S CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN SEARCHING FOR PEACE BETWEEN ZAIRE AND ANGOLA. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT //TRIBUNE// WAS QUICK TO APPALUD GARBA: AWOLOWE'S PAPER HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY SKEPTICAL OF LAST YEAR'S HARD-LINE PRO-MPLA POLICY. BUT FOR XENOPHOBIC AND OFTEN ILLITERATE//SKETCH// TO TAKE SAME LINE--AND IN A WELL WRITTEN EDITORIAL--IS MOST UNUSUAL. PERHAPS THEY WERE "TELEGUIDED."

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